Baptist/Disney boycott leaves many with questions about how far to go

From A1

discussion for us to have."

The boycott left many local Southern Baptists immersed in questions: Should we support it? And if so, how far should we go? Should we cancel our trip to Disney World? Sell our Disney tapes, books and clothes? Stop watching ABC and ESPN?

To answer those questions, many families sat down together and discussed a variety of issues: Homosexuality. Premarital sex. Profanity. Violence and nudity in the movies and on TV.

For the Brays — Tammy, Doug and their four children, ages 14, 12, 11 and 8 — it's been a chance to talk about family ideals.

"We talked a lot about our values, but that's not a new discussion at our house. It's not like it's brand-new territory or anything," said Tammy Bray, whose family attends Heart of the Springs Baptist Church. "We talk a lot about house rules — like the kids know they're not allowed to see a PG-13 movie without asking. It's a constant discussion, even for things we sit down and watch together as a family."

The Brays' decision: No more spending money on Disney products — though they can use what they already own. No renting videos, no going to "Hercules," no buying paraphernalia. The children's initial reaction?

"Some panic," Tammy said. "A little, 'What are we going to do, what are we not going to do? What does it mean?' We talked about why we made the decisions we did and how we hope it can make a difference. So far, the kids haven't come up with anything they've been desperate to do that we've said 'no' to."

For 11-year-old Laurie Bray, the no-Disney rules don't pose a major problem. She can still watch her "Little Mermaid" and "Cinderella" videos if she wants to, and she can still watch "Home Improvement" with the rest of the family.

"I like watching 'Home Improvement,' but I wouldn't really care if we would boycott it, because I think they've lowered their standards," Laurie said. "Like, they have people sleeping with people before they're married."

But what about "Hercules?" Won't it be strange to be the only kid on the block who hasn't seen the summer's big movie? That's OK, Laurie said.

"I don't really want to see it," she said.

Laurie will miss shopping, though.

"We can still go to The Disney Store, but we can't buy anything," she said. "That's really the only thing I don't like about it."

Disney deprivation isn't mandatory for all Southern Baptist youth. Robert Beckman, youth minister at Heart of the Springs, recently returned from a trip to Alaska with the church's youth group. He said the teens talked as much about having watched "Hercules" as they did about the boycott. And when Beckman mentioned the topic, "it was never like, 'Hey, today's Bible study is going to be on Disney.' It was more like casual conversation as we were going about our business.

"This is not a slam on homosexuality," said Beckman, who says his family will support the boycott by not making any new Disney-oriented purchases. "It's simply a statement to Disney that there are certain values that they should stick with, as they have in the past. What we're saying is be smart as a family — when you're spending money on entertainment, think about where it's going. Disney is into some good stuff, and I hope they prosper from it. But they're also into things that are not moral, and that needs to show up on their business ledger."

Is the boycott having any effect on Disney locally? Good luck finding out. Local managers at The Disney Store and Carmike Cinemas (where "Hercules" is showing) refused to comment on how business has been in the past month. Instead, they referred all requests to corporate headquarters. And more than a month into the boycott, Disney continues to respond to media inquiries with a standard statement: "We are proud that the Disney brand creates more family entertainment of every kind than anyone else in the world and we plan to increase that production."

Some Baptists view Disney as aloof and unresponsive — and they wonder if their voice will be heard.

"I think it's a tossup, really, whether they care," said Jay Badry, pastor at First Southern Baptist Church. "That's the whole thing: Do you listen to the consumer or do you just pass it off as a bunch of religious people and that doesn't count? I don't know what they'll do in their board meetings. But if it truly affects the bottom line, maybe they'll at least give it lip service and make some adjustments."

Lighty said, "I just want Disney to own up and say, 'Yeah, we are doing this.' Quit calling yourself something you're not."

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authorities.

"Those who don't, those are the ones we need to look at more closely. They're the ones avoid-

home on Club Heights Drive in the Broadmoor area, according to court documents. The man

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Disney boycott carries on in Springs

Families using issue to discuss values at home

By **Scott Smith**
The Gazette

How goes the boycott?

Very quietly, thanks.

No Mickey Mouse dolls hanging in effigy, no blazing bonfires fueled by Disney videos, nobody picketing the local ABC television affiliate.

But even though it's not overt, the Southern Baptists' boycott of the Walt Disney Co. is alive in the Pikes Peak region. Thousands of families are making a stand in the name of morality, and they're revisiting, reinforcing and fine-tuning their beliefs along the way.

The call to boycott Disney and its myriad holdings (including ABC television and radio, ESPN, individual shows like "Home Improvement," movie studios, record companies and pro sports franchises) came June 18, when the Southern Baptist Convention asked the church's 15 million members to just say no to a quintessential American entity. It was a way for church leaders to protest what they consider Disney's "gay-friendly" policies and the company's migration from wholesome, family oriented entertainment.

Local Southern Baptists have responded in a variety of ways. Some aren't going to the new Disney movie, "Hercules." Some aren't shopping at The Disney Store. Some are trying to decide whether to watch "Home Improvement" or whether they should buy products made by companies that advertise on the show. Some disagree with the boycott and haven't altered their lives at all. Some are trying to decide how they feel.

For the about 16,000 Southern Baptists who live in El Paso County, it has been an intensely individual, family-by-family decision.

At the very least, the boycott issue has provided a valuable opportunity to improve familial communication.

"For families, it's been an excellent point of dialogue — and that's a good thing," said Bill Lighty, pastor of Chapel Hills Baptist Church. "We talked to our children about values, and about how those values span the social, religious, economic and political spectrum. We talked about how you don't put your values in a vacuum — they impact every aspect of your life if they're truly going to be values. That was a really healthy

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In 1977, a flash flood hit Johnstown, Pa., killing 80 people and causing $350 million worth of damage.

■ **Today's Birthdays:** Rock musician Carlos Santana is 50. Actress Donna Dixon is 40. Country singer Radney Foster is 38. Rock singer Chris Cornell is 33. Actor Reed Diamond ("Homicide: Life on the Street") is 30. Actor Charlie Korsmo ("Hook") is 19.

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